

Companion

Supporting end of life care in Northern Trust

End of Life Companion

A small number of esteemed volunteering opportunities have arisen within the Northern Trust known as 'End of Life Companions'. This companion role involves supporting patients and those people important to them as they approach the end of their lives.

Volunteers are vital to a range of care settings in helping to enhance people's experience, making a real difference to patients and those people important to them.

End of Life Companions are people who support dying patients, their families and friends. As an End of Life Companion you will offer one to one support, comfort and companionship, particularly for patients with few or no visitors, or for those people who require additional support. Each visit is unique, and special.

There are so many benefits of becoming a Companion. These may include:

- giving time to others
- creating positive feelings and a sense of reward and purpose
- helping you connect with other people and build a sense of belonging
- trying something new and developing your skills
- obtaining insight into caring roles





End of Life Companion role description

Overview

Under the supervision of nursing staff, the Companion will support dying patients and those people who are important to them. They should be able to commit to a 2-3 hour shift when called to companion a patient who is dying.

Key duties

During the visit, the Companion will:

- Act as a 'compassionate carer' this may be achieved through:
 - Sitting quietly with the patient
 - Reading to the patient or quietly chatting
 - Holding their hand
 - Playing music if requested
 - Giving a simple hand massage
 - Reporting to Registered Staff that the patient is uncomfortable or in pain
 - Using their initiative as to what would help the patient or family most under the direction of nursing staff
 - Relieving relatives or friends who need a break, but who don't want to leave their loved one alone run errands to the shop, or make refreshments for relatives
- Inform nursing staff whilst carrying out their shift of any needs that patients may have. Companions must not assist with patients personal care
- Inform the End of Life Companion Coordinator of any changes or significant happenings in connection with the person at the end of their shift (such as the patient has died)
- Have the confidence to explain the End of Life Companion role to the public, families and members of ward staff
- Maintain confidentiality at all times
- Adhere to infection control guidelines
- Record their visit and participate in any feedback mechanisms
- Attend regular group support and learning and development opportunities for End of Life Companions
- Attend individual sessions with the End of Life Companion Coordinator, as required





Skills or qualifications required

- Have a friendly, compassionate and sensitive nature, with the ability to be a good listener
- Have the confidence to communicate effectively with all staff, patients and visitors
- Have an ability to use their own initiative and work in a sensible and appropriate manner at all times under the direction of a Registered Nurse
- Demonstrate an ability to be a non-anxious, calming presence, and use silence well
- Have a willingness to learn and operate within set boundaries
- Be respectful to individuals regardless of their race, gender, culture, religion, disability, sexual orientation and marital status
- Have a mature perspective on life and death
- Be aware of own emotions and self-care needs

What companions can expect to gain

- Induction to the hospital and the wards and any training or updates related to this role
- Support and supervision from a dedicated member of staff
- A greater insight into the day to day management of a busy acute hospital environment.
- Experience of working within a committed team of volunteers
- Reimbursement of travel or (bus/ train) transport as outlined within the NHSCCT Volunteering Policy within a 30 mile radius
- Knowledge that their volunteering is making a difference to the experience of patients and those people important to them at end of life
- An opportunity for development of personal skills
- Acknowledgement and recognition of their commitment to volunteering as appropriate

General information

Companions:

- Are asked not to undertake duties outside this role description without checking first with their End of Life Companion Coordinator





- Must not undertake any manual handling tasks or clinical patient contact such as personal care
- Can offer emotional support and empathy but must under no circumstances offer advice or a medical opinion on a patient’s treatment or assist with anything of a clinical nature
- Must not provide pastoral or religious advice but signpost to ward staff or relevant hospital chaplain
- Are reminded of the importance of confidentiality at all times. They must under no circumstances discuss patients’ affairs with any person other than the relevant staff
- Are reminded of the importance of operating within any statute policy relevant to the NHSCT eg. Health and Safety, Safeguarding and GDPR
- Are in place to complement the work of Trust employed staff and are not used to replace roles that are usually undertaken by Trust employed staff.
- Should receive regular support, supervision and training where applicable

Steps to becoming a companion:

- Complete a registration form with two references from non-family members and other relevant documents related to the role
- Participate in a selection interview/ informal chat
- Commit to attending group support meetings

NHSCT is committed to being a diverse and inclusive organisation. We aim to demonstrate support for all of our staff and volunteers, valuing each individual’s contribution regardless of age, gender identity, sexual orientation, marital status, civil partnership status, disability, nationality, race, religion or belief. We are committed to providing equal opportunities to our staff and volunteers and to taking steps to ensure our staff and volunteers are protected from discrimination.

For more information or if you have any questions regarding this volunteer role, please contact the NHSCT Volunteer Service on 02825 635575 or email volunteer.service@northerntrust.hscni.net

Other registration and role information:

Location	➡	Antrim Area Hospital
How often?	➡	3 hours a week
How long?	➡	For a minimum of 6 months
Minimum age	➡	18 years
Disclosure checks	➡	Enhanced with barring
Is driving essential for the role?	➡	No

